

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 OMB-01 IGA-02 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 L-03 SS-20 PM-07 NSC-10 DRC-01 /090 W

----- 002405

O R 121310Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

INFO COMUSSAG/7TH AIR FORCE

CINCPACAF

MACTHAI

USDAO SAIGON

SECSTATE WASHDC 4949

SECDEF WASHDC

CJCS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 2125

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MOPS, PINS, EAID, CB

SUBJECT: KHMER GOVERNMENT'S URGENT NEED FOR FIREFIGHTING
EQUIPMENT

1. THIS MORNING GKR FOREIGN MINISTER (KEUKY LIM) CONVEYED TO CHARGE GKR CABINET'S APPEAL TO USG FOR FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT TO ENABLE AUTHORITIES TO DEAL MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH CONFLAGRATIONS CAUSED BY COMMUNIST ATTACKS BY FIRE. CABINET FORMULATED THE APPEAL DURING THE COURSE OF JTS EMERGENCY MEETING LAST NIGHT, EVEN AS FIRE FROM YESTERDAY AFTERNOON'S ATTACK WERE STILL RAGING.

2. WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY IN PHNOM PENH WAS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE INSUFFICIENT CAPABILITY OF THE GKR TO COPE WITH ABF-INDUCED FIRES. THE EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE WAS SO PATHETICALLY INADEQUATE (4-5 ANTIQUATED, POSSIBLY HOMEMADE TRUCKS) EVEN WITH THE ADDITION OF A TRUCK BROUGHT FROM POCHENTONG AIRPORT, THAT IT HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON THE FIRES. IN THE END NATURAL FACTORS,
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RATHER THAN FIREFIGHTING EFFORTS, WERE MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR

THE EXTINCTION OF THE FIRES.

3. THE TRAGIC SCORE OF YESTERDAY'S LARGEST FIRE, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN AN AREA WHICH RECEIVED LESS THAN HALF OF THE ABF'S 55 ROUNDS THAT IMPACTED, WAS AS FOLLOWS: ABOUT 125 KILLED AND 100 WOUNDED OR BURNED, MANY HUNDREDS OF BUILDINGS DESTROYED WITH CONTENTS, 10,000 PERSONS HOMELESS AND AN AREA OF APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF SQUARE KILOMETER LEVELED.

4. FIREFIGHTING WAS RENDERED MORE DIFFICULT BY WINDS AND EXTREME DRYNESS OF CURRENT SEASON, TINDER BOX CHARACTER OF MOST LOWER CLASS-HOUSES AND IMPROVISED SHELTERS OF REFUGEE FAMILIES, AND LACK OF NEARBY WATER SUPPLIES IN MANY AREAS.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. THAT CINCPAC ENDEAVOR SOONEST TO FIND SIX FIRETRUCKS IN THE THEATRE, FOR IMMEDIATE SHIPMENT ON A LOAN BASIS TO GKR (BELIEVE WE CAN ARRANGE WITH AID THROUGH CIP OR ESF TO PAY AIR FREIGHT AND POSSIBLY REHABILITATION COSTS AT END OF LOAN PERIOD).

B. THAT CINCPAC ARRANGE FOR A FIREFIGHTING EXPERT TO BE SENT HERE SOONEST, TO SURVEY THE SITUATION, AND DETERMINE WHAT EQUIPMENT WOULD BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE.

C. THAT THE EQUIPMENT BE ACCOMPANIED BY ONE OR MORE PERSONS WHO COULD TRAIN KHMER CIVILIAN FIREMEN IN ITS PROPER USE AND MAINTENANCE. CENDERS

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